



## The Committee on Energy and Commerce

For 210 years, the Committee on Energy and Commerce, the oldest legislative standing committee in the U.S. House of Representatives, has served as the principal guide for the House in matters relating to the promotion of commerce and to the public's health and marketplace interests.



In performing this historic function, the Committee has developed what is arguably the broadest (non-tax-oriented) jurisdiction of any Congressional committee. Today, it maintains principal responsibility for legislative oversight relating to telecommunications, consumer protection, food and drug safety, public health, air quality and environmental health, the supply and delivery of energy, and interstate and foreign commerce in general. This jurisdiction extends over five Cabinet-level departments and seven independent agencies--from the Energy Department, Health and Human Services, the Transportation Department to the Federal Trade Commission, Food and Drug Administration, and Federal Communications Commission, and sundry quasi-governmental organizations.

To manage the wide variety of issues it encounters, **the Committee relies on the front-line work of six subcommittees: the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection, the Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality, the Subcommittee on Environment and Hazardous Materials, the Subcommittee on Health, the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, and the Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet.**

These subcommittees provide the full Committee with enormous flexibility to keep pace with American enterprise. Indeed, the history of the Committee on Energy and Commerce reflects

the history of Congress as it has worked over the past 200 years to assure the prosperity of the nation's dynamic economy and its citizens.

A small, dark blue rectangular graphic with the text "Committee History (1795 - present)" in white, sans-serif font.

The Committee was originally formed as the Committee on Commerce and Manufactures on December 14, 1795. Prior to this, legislation was drafted in the Committee of the Whole or in special ad hoc committees, appointed for specific limited purposes. However, the growing demands of the new nation required that Congress establish a permanent committee to manage its Constitutional authority to regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States.

From this time forward, as the nation grew and Congress dealt with new public policy concerns and created new committees, the **Energy and Commerce Committee has maintained its dominant and central position as Congress' monitor of our nation's commercial progress -- a focus reflected in its changing jurisdiction, both in name and practice.**

In 1819, the Committee's name was changed to the Committee on Commerce, reflecting the creation of a separate Manufacturers Committee and the increasing scope of and complexity of American commercial activity, which was expanding the Committee's jurisdiction from navigational aids and the nascent Federal health service to foreign trade and tariffs. Thomas J. Bliley, who chaired the Committee from 1995 to 2000, chose to use this traditional name, which underscores the Committee's role for Congress on this front.

In 1891, in emphasis of the Committee's evolving activities, the name was again changed to the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce - a title it maintained until 1981, when, under incoming Chairman John D. Dingell, the Committee first assumed what is now its present name to emphasize its lead role in guiding our nation's energy policy, which is essential for assuring commercial prosperity.

In practice, the wide-ranging work of the Committee on Energy and Commerce today builds upon a long record of achievement, which has tracked the dynamic growth of the nation from the early days of the Republic. The Committee's initial achievements overseeing the Federal

health service for sick and disabled seaman developed, eventually, into its oversight now of the Public Health Service and National Institutes of Health. Its historic jurisdiction over health, safety, and commerce generally also can be traced in the evolution of and continued oversight through such landmark legislation as the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act and the Clean Air Act, as well as the Federal Trade Commission Act, and the U.S. Code's Motor Vehicle Safety provisions. Today, when the public reads about the auto safety goals of the TREAD Act or about national energy policy, it can trace these measures back to the seminal legislation produced by the Committee over the years.



From a broader perspective, the Committee's place in Congress can be observed in how it has kept pace overseeing the changing avenues of commerce in the nation -- and the world -- over the past two centuries. The Committee's role in assuring a vibrant economy has evolved with changing times -- underscored recently by its groundbreaking work on legislation that provides for innovation in and expanded access to high-speed Internet services. From the chiefly maritime-oriented nature of interstate and foreign trade of the early years of the Republic, to the railroads and then air of the 19th and 20th Centuries, to the telecommunications and digital avenues developing rapidly and essentially for continued prosperity in the 21st Century, the Committee continues to look forward, determined to assure the prosperity of our great nation.

### **Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet**

Congressman Lee Terry also serves on the Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet. This subcommittee deals with issues regarding:

- *Interstate and foreign telecommunications including, but not limited to, all telecommunication and information transmission by broadcast, radio, wire, microwave, satellite, or other mode; and,*

- *Homeland security-related aspects of the foregoing, including cybersecurity.*

## **Subcommittee on Environment and Hazardous Materials**

Congressman Lee Terry serves on the Subcommittee on Environment and Hazardous Materials. This subcommittee deals with issues regarding:

- *Environmental protection in general, including the Safe Drinking Water Act and risk assessment matters;*
- *Solid waste, hazardous waste and toxic substances, including Superfund and RCRA;*
- *Mining, oil, gas, and coal combustion wastes;*
- *Noise pollution control; and,*
- *Homeland security-related aspects of the foregoing.*

## **Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection**

Congressman Lee Terry serves on the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection. This subcommittee deals with issues regarding:

- *Interstate and foreign commerce, including all trade matters within the jurisdiction of the full committee;*
- *Regulation of commercial practices (the FTC), including sports-related matters;*
- *Consumer affairs and consumer protection, including privacy matters generally; consumer product safety (the CPSC); and product liability; and motor vehicle safety;*
- *Regulation of travel, tourism, and time; and,*
- *Homeland security-related aspects of the foregoing, including cybersecurity.*

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